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A
SERMON

Preach'd in the
CATHEDRAL of LINCOLN,
July XVIII. 1681.

Being the
ASSIZE-MONDAY.

By DANIEL NICOLS, A.M. Rector
of Scotton in *Lincolnshire*: and sometimes
Fellow of *St. John's* in *Oxon*.

L O N D O N,

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Thomas Sawbridge, at the *Three Flower-de-*
lucies in *Little-Britain*, 1681.

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To the Right Worshipful
 Sir CHRISTOPHER NEVILE, K^t.
 High-Sheriff of the County of Lincoln.

SIR,

IT is very great pity, that those who pretend to Religion, should be given to Faction, as if Religion (I mean true) which is but one) could Patronize Division; as gross a mistake as Pope Adrian's Interpretation was of St. Gregory's Liturgy, which was preferred to that of St. Ambrose, because it was torn into a thousand bits and scraps; whereas the other remained whole, and therefore by him judg'd unfit to be used. Who could believe that a Pope should be guilty of such a construction! Sure I am, he hath given the same measures to many of his Sons and Daughters, who (though they pretend Liberty of Conscience) yet are very angry that their own small conceits about Religion (which are divers, and contrary each to other) cannot be counte-

nanced by Law ; and will rather chuse to have a thousand Religious lyes imposed, (since they cannot have their wills) than that Religion to flourish , which is at present Established.. But as God is one, and his Name one ; so is it requisite, that the solemn Worship, which all pay to him, in their publick addresses, should be but one, that with one heart and lip his praise may be exalted by all : This was the ancient and primitive Sacrifice which the Church did acceptably offer up, Acts 2. 46, 47. And they continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, &c. And you will easily perceive, Sir , that Religion in the Fountain (where the water is living and pure) differs far from what she is called at the foot of the hill , after her streams have passed through the corrupt brains of a confused multitude. It's a melancholly, doleful sight , to observe a vast number of phrantick persons , pretending to the height of skill in Religious Chymistry, as if their inspired noddles were the only limbecks to extract the spirit and quintessence of Religion ;

as if they only knew the secrets of the Kingdom, and have been taken up into the third Heaven, ravished with joys unspeakable, fed with hidden Manna. Some of these are to be pitied; such (I mean) as are humble, willing to be informed, who have been cheated out of their good designs, by the subtilty of wicked men: the rest deserve the lash, and ought to be scourged into better manners. The great design of these Religious Quacks, is to set men at an infinite distance from the solemn service of Almighty God: and the first lesson they teach their Children and Proselytes, is, that our Liturgy is Popery, that our Ministers are Antichristian, that we have all received the mark of the Beast. Some of their Novices I have met with, who instead of discouraging, have turn'd over their Bibles, always turned down at certain places; amongst the rest, to be sure the 13 Revelat. 16, 17. must be one: Would to God they were cut off, that hunt after souls to destroy them; that creep into houses, to lead captive silly women. No severity can be too great for those who exercise cruelty and tyranny over them, for whom Christ has shed his most precious blood. I confess, Sir,
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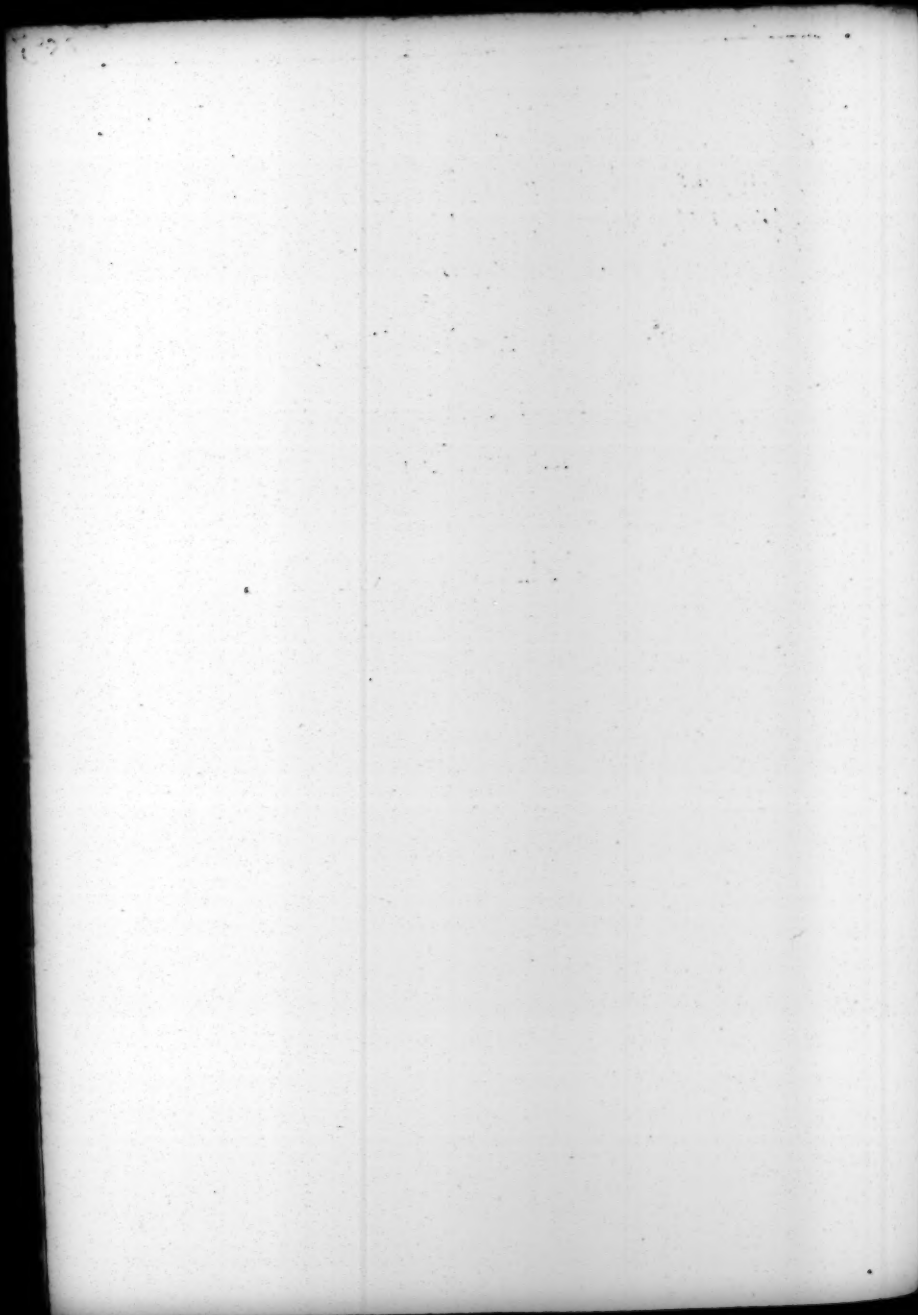
that an Address of this nature can no way be suitable to a Dedication; nor had either it, or the ensuing discourse ever seen the light, if the desire of the Right Honourable the Judges, with the select and choice company of Knights and Gentlemen of the Grand Jury, had not been as forcible as a Command, which I cannot but mention as an excuse to my appearance in Print; For how could I deny so general an expectation, without Imputations of disrespect?

To your self, Sir; give me leave to plead the design of this Preface, to be a Chaos to that which followeth, hoping that some of those persons, who have taken up their Religion upon trust, will be persuaded to reflect upon themselves, and judge how inconsistent it is with true Piety, to absent themselves from the publick Worship of God, and be reckoned amongst those who break the peace, spoil the beauty, discourage the friends, encourage the enemies of our Church. That the God of Heaven would succeed the good design of this Paper to his own glory, the comfort and advantage of our much-despised and neglected Mother; That he would pour out of his blessings,
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both Temporal and Spiritual, upon you, and your truly religious and devout Lady, shall be the daily prayer of him, who is glad of an opportunity to declare to the World, that he is

Your very much obliged,
most thankful, and
most humble Servant,

DANIEL NICOLS.



1 SAM. 12. 14, 15.

If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the Commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye, and the King, that reigneth over you, continue following the Lord your God. But if ye will not obey the Voice of the Lord, but rebel against the Commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your Fathers.

SATAN was always an Enemy to Religion, not only true, but false, and would (if it were possible) force all pretences to it out of the World; for wheresoever that is professed, a Deity must be acknowledged; and how is it credible, that he who affects Supremacy himself, should indure a Superior Power, if he could help it? But because the Character of a God is engraven upon the tables of our hearts, therefore does he improve his utmost Policy and Power, to spoil the beauty, and exact proportion of true Religion, representing it to some as harsh and severe, that none may dare to take up the profession of it, but the Sons of *Issachar*, men composed of slavish, dreggy, and melancholly humors: To others he renders it so facile and easie, that it's impossible for them to keep their Religion and Sacri-

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fice to their lusts. Many he benighteth with thick Egyptian-darkness, perswading, either that there are more Gods than one, or no God at all, or (that which is as bad as the worst) that he himself must have divine Worship and Honour. But he that loves the Souls of his creatures, hath always declared to the world, by the most curious and exact Government of the same, that he is a holy, just, and righteous God, and expecteth of them that Worship him, that they be holy and virtuous in all manner of Conversation, and especially to his peculiar people he hath given severe and strict Commands, to observe the pattern given them from the Mount, and not to swerve a hairs breadth from the same, appearing more jealous in the instance of divine Worship and Honour, than in any other concern. This is one great reason (if not the only) of the charge given in the Text; *If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, &c.* For the Children of Israel were now innovating in State-affairs, chopping and changing of Governments, Kings are desired in the place of Judges; and that which gave the greatest occasion of displeasure to the great King of Heaven, was not (as I humbly conceive) either the change of Government considered in it self, or the desire of that change, but rather the copy and example, which they chuse to follow in this alteration, viz. the Canaanites, and the Nations round about them, which were all of them Idolatrous, and cursed of God; those must perswade them, that it is better to have a King, than a Judge (although of God's immediate choice) to rule over them. Now as all changes and innovations are dangerous, so
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An Assize-Sermon.

3

here in Special, for this reason, lest Conformity to them in Civils, might by degrees incline them to a Conformity in Spirituals also; for it is commonly seen, that the Discipline and Government of the Church, does follow that of the State; and it is apparent, that if there be not some harmony and consent between the one and the other, there must necessarily ensue Convulsions both of Church and State. And it is no ways improbable, that *Heathens* (though fond and foolish enough in their conceits about Religion) did, to avoid these ruptures and storms, advise their Disciples, not rigorously, in strange Countreys, to adhere to the Rites and Ceremonies of their own Gods, but rather to condescend, for the sake of Peace, to Worship the Gods of the place, according to their own customs. This compliance (though it might pass well enough, in point of Policy, in those places, where no true God was worshipped) yet cannot here be endured; to prevent which, the holy One of *Israel* had frequently inculcated this Command, *Not to follow strange Gods, nor to walk in their ways*; which were called *Via Amorrhæorum*, to keep themselves close to the pattern of the Mount; and as some conceive those Prohibitions mentioned *Levit. 19. 19. Thou shalt not let thy cattel gender with divers kinds: thou shalt not sow thy fields with divers kinds, and a garment of divers kinds of Linsey-woolsey shall not come upon thee*, are purposely design'd by Almighty God to keep the children of *Israel* at the vastest distance from some Superstitious, and Idolatrous customs, then in force with the Heathens near them.

This must however be the cause of those multiplied phrases, and flood of words poured out in the text, and other places of the same nature; so much signifying one and the same thing; that if we had not a reverence for Divine Writ, and a through belief, that it proceedeth from the God of Truth, the imputation of Battology, so common amongst Heathens, or Tautology, so common amongst our selves, would not seem injurious.

The words then under a double Hypothesis, contain a strict and severe charge to the Children of *Israel*, to keep close to that form of Religious Worship, which the King of kings had Established amongst them: For though he had now, upon their importunity, indulged them in Politicks, giving them leave to be like other Nations in Kingly Government; yet he expected that he himself, as God, should be worshipped according to his own Prescriptions.

To the first Hypothesis, for their encouragement, is annexed a Promise, *If ye will fear, &c. then both ye, and the King which reigneth over you, shall continue following the Lord.* To the latter Hypothesis, is added a Threatning, to check Disobedience; *If ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord, &c.*

These two Hypothetical Propositions may be reduced *Categorically*, after this manner: That a zealous Observation of true Religion, is the most infallible way of securing Peace between the Trinity of Persons, mentioned in the Text, *God, the King, and the People.*

Secondly,

An Affize-Sermon.

5

Secondly, The neglect, or contempt of Religion, does most effectually break Peace between God and a Nation, and consequently bring ruine and destruction upon the same.

The first of these (if duly handled) will involve the latter, where three things must be inquired after.

I. What that Religion is of the Text. Then how it comes by its cementing and uniting Nature. Lastly, What the Priviledge or Promise signifieth, which is annexed, *Then shall both ye and the King, &c.*

First then, what is Religion? If there were but one or two in the world, it might be no hard matter to define them: but when every Town and Village almost is full of Faction, and every Faction hath a different perswasion; and this opinion, or perswasion, must be cryed up for Religion, Who is able to coin Diffinitions fast enough? And methinks it should not a little conduce to confirm those in their present Faith, who yet retain soundness in their Judgments, to take a short view of the phantastical dreams of men about Religion. One tells you, that the very Genius of it is Separation, and pleads Scripture for it: *Come out from amongst them, lest ye partake of her plagues;* and dar'st, with the proud *Monastist*, exclude Heaven, and confine to Hell, all such as jump not with them in all their blasphemies. A second defines his *per Illuminationem, & Revelationem*, and, with the stately Greek, supposeth none to see but himself; all the world, at most, have but one eye, whilst he sees perfectly with both.

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If you will compare Old and New *Rome* together, you will find them to accord very well in the account of Religion: *Cicero* thus describeth it, *Religio est quæ curam affert ceremoniis divini cultus*: And who knows not, that the Religion of *Rome* at present, consists rather in washing the out-sides of dishes and platters, in crossing, and cringing, and creeping, than in the Devotion and Worship of the Soul; which cannot be very intent, whilst busied in an exact observance of so many External Rites. The truth is, the multitude of Ceremonies imposed by that Church, hath devoured the greatest part of her substantial Religious Worship; but because, without Religion, she cannot pretend to be the Church of God, therefore must her Ceremonies stand for her Religion. The *Atheist* defines Religion by fear, and tells you, That

Primus in Orbe Deos fecit Timor.

And will force himself, like *Lucian*, to laugh and scoff at Religion, as if it were nothing but the pretty device of Politicians, to keep fools in awe: Those are some of the dreams, and mad conceits of men, about Religion, which I produce meerly as a taste of those infinite conceptions, whereby Satan works cunningly upon the minds of men, perswading them, either that Religion is not yet defined, and so leaves them in the Labyrinths of Scepticism; or else that there is no God, nor Religion at all, and so drowns them in Irreligion and Atheism. Thus this beautiful Virgin is every minute in danger to be destroyed
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by the beasts of *Ephesus*, the latter sort; and deflowred by the former, tho pretended Lovers; who, by their abominable Separations, have torn into pieces the seamless garment which Christ had beautified her with; and have put upon her a Coat of divers colours and patches, representing rather the spots and changes of the Moon, than the lustre and beauty of the Sun; she is become a *stone of stumbling*, a *rock of offence*, scarcely known; so miserably disfigured, that she is like that Stone which *Pliny* calls *Achates*, *tot variis inumbratus coloribus, ut unum lapidem esse, minimè credamus*. But thanks be to God, that in this night of confusion, some of us know what we Worship, and what our Worship is; and to satisfie men of unbiassed principles, I need go no farther than the Text to fetch a true Description of both; for it must necessarily follow, from the nature of the promise and threatning, that the Worship we offer is to the living God, who made Heaven and Earth, according to the Precepts of his revealed Will. This is our solemn and publick Sacrifice, so defined by *St. Austin*, in his *Civitas Dei*: and thus it is distinguished from the private Devotions of a Religious Soul; which tho it be very acceptable to the great God, yet falls far short of that acceptance, which the union of hearts and voices in publick Assemblies findeth with him: He hath always loved the gates of *Zion*, better than the dwelling-places of *Jerusalem*: the reason of which, the holy Prophet giveth, *Psal. 122. 4. Because thither went up the Tribes, the Tribes of the Lord, unto the Testimony of Israel, to*
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give thanks unto the Name of the Lord. When a multitude speak the same thing, and conspire together to offer up their Sacrifices to the Lord, then does the Glory of the Lord appear; then does he manifest his gracious Presence, as he did his Glory in the days of Solomon, 2 Chron. 5. 13, 14. It came to pass when the Trumpets and Singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord: and when they lift up their voice with the Cymbals, and Trumpets, and Instruments of Musick, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the Priests could not stand to minister, by reason of the Cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God. The want of this sweet harmony, and consent of Souls in the Worship of God, is the reason why our Church mourns at this day: her visible Members speak not the same things, but divers, and contrary one to another. Babel is found in Bethel; confusion in the house of God; as if we would force that to be the true and genuine meaning of our Saviour, when he brought the Everlasting Gospel into the World; *I come not to send Peace, but a Sword.* How unlike are we to those *Κατοικησάτες τὴν πόλιν*, who came up thither to Worship; and tho of divers Nations and Languages, yet were they of the same Religion, from whence undoubtedly they were called *Jews*? We, tho we use no other but our Mother-tongue in the Service of God, yet have we more Religions, than they were Nations. Can any good come out of

of this *Galilee*? Is it likely that a fire should be quenched with Oyl, or a healing plaister be made of Corrosives? Let us fear, rather lest a Church divided against it self should not stand: *Rome* rides faster, and gets more ground upon the speckled horse of our own divisions, than upon the prancing Genet of her own worship; she cunningly does her work, and sits still, whilst we, by our Separations, are perfecting her designs in our own ruines; and lest any should wonder why so magisterially I seem to obtrude my own Sentiments upon the World, let him but impartially consider how the old Axiom is again revived in *Rome* [*divide & impera*]; and then let him tell me whether the reason of our present impotency and weakness, and of their hopes and expectations, does not proceed principally from those cursed and sinful Divisions amongst Protestants?

My humble Address therefore to this Right Honourable and Noble Assembly, is, That in your respective places, as Judges, as Magistrates, as Nobles, as Gentlemen, you would glorifie your God, save (if possible) your Country from that destruction, which as a dark Cloud hangs over her head, that you would imbellish and perfume your names to all generations, by honouring Religion, by vindicating her innocent beauty from the vile assaults, and brutish rapes of prophane and dissolute men. Assert the solemnity of our Worship, by your publick, constant, and reverential attendance, against all Detractors, who set up

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Altar

Altar against Altar, Church against Church, and make it the greatest part of their Religion, to defame ours. Defend the purity and simplicity of it, from the superstitious and corrupt mixtures of the Church of *Rome*, by a generous and rational observance of decency and order in the Worship of God. Religion takes no pleasure, either in a nasty, slovenly behaviour, or delight in a Pharisaical gaudery. Our Ceremonies are few in number, easily told, as easily understood, not like those of the other Church, a load insupportable, scarcely inferior to the Bondage of the *Jewish* State. Again, Let me beseech you to show your Zeal for it in the Presence of *Atheists*; Let not Hell (tho it be broken loose in our days) make you ashamed of your Crucified Saviour, and his Royal Laws. It argueth a poor, sneaking, ingentile spirit, when men shall be hector'd out of their Religion, by a company of Sots, that have no God but their Belly, and understand no other pleasure, but what Bruits do find. *Haec ulla Numina expavescent Calitum, Venti offerent Deos ignorant ceteros*, as *Euripides* expresseth them. These are the *Antichrists* which endeavour publicly and privately the ruine of our Religion, a Jewel too precious to be lost, if you please to consider the second particular, the healing and cementing nature of it: It's the Balsome of the Creation, the Pandora of all excellent Virtues, which undoubtedly will heal all wounds in Church and State, may they be applied. But that which does
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An Assize-Sermon.

II

not a little advance the Excellency of it is, that the perfection which she challengeth as her own, does not proceed meerly from the abstracted blessing of the great God, but in part from the curious composure of that Spirit which God has endued her with, which her very Name, as (St. *Augustin* and *Propercius* testifie) does sufficiently demonstrate, this being that which fasteneth the Soul and Conscience to God and Goodness. The *Greeks* translate it by Θεοφιλημα, and those that joynd themselves as Profelytes to the Jewish Church, were called ιουδαίμαροι, and sometimes waiters for the Kingdom of God, longing for the Revelation of the Messias. We may judge of the force that Religion has, by the combining nature of Superstition and Will-worship, which (as *Lactantius* observes) is but *vera Religionis unitatrix*, it makes men all of one mind and judgment; *Pignoratos reddit animos*, it causeth them to pawn their Souls, and Affections, and Estates also, one to another. *Herod* and *Pilate*, though desperate enemies before, were then made friends, when Christ was to be crucified. Old *Rome* will dye to the last man *pro aris, & focis*; new *Rome* is, at this day, as zealous for her new-coined Devotions, and will unite all the World over against those, whom they are pleased to Damn for *Hereticks*: The *Jews* stand as stily to the Traditions of their Forefathers, the *Rabbins* and Doctors of their Church, as the *Turks* to the Precepts of their Alcoran, or we to the Old and New Testaments. Now, if the name of Religion,

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though it be false, carrieth with it such Magical force and power, to how much more may true Religion pretend? He that reads the History of the Ten Persecutions, when the native and simple beauty of Religion ravished the Souls of those bleis'd Martyrs, will easily believe that she is strong and mighty, as well as amiable and lovely. The pacifick argument which *Abraham* urgeth to *Lot*, when there was discord between their herds-men, was this, That they were of the same Religion, Gen. 13. 8. *Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, between my herds-men and thy herds-men, for we be brethren: Hoc est, Fide, & Religione*; and the more cogent was his request, because the *Canaanite* and the *Perizite*, men that were strangers to God and Religion, dwelt then in the Land. No sooner had the influence of it touch'd the Souls of the Three thousand, *Acts* 2. 44, but they were together, and had all things common. I confess, when Religion began to grow into Faction, then sprang up Divisions; a parting of Minds and Souls, as well as of Purfes and Estates; then was the Common of Christianity turn'd into Inclosures, when one cries out, *I am of Paul, another, I am of Apollos; a third, I am for Caphas; and a fourth, I am for Christ*; that is neither for Ministers, nor Ordinances, but only for Jesus and his Spirit: But who dar'st impute this to Religion, when *St. Paul* tells you it proceeds from the flesh, *1 Cor.* 3. 4. *For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollo, are ye not carnal?*

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But the glory of true Religion will be more apparent ; If you observe, (1.) That she is a most perfect piece of Beauty, and therefore of her own nature attractive ; for love to its proper object, is strong, and never at rest, till it does *transire in amatum* ; the drawing out of those lines of Perfection upon her, was not trusted to the pencil of *Apelles*, or the curious finger of any Mortal, but the unerring hand of God himself ; nor was there any Copy or Exemplar to draw by, but himself, he was *Archiluxus*, the Original of her Perfection ; in her shineth forth his Wisdom, Goodness, Mercy, Patience, Justice, Purity, and all other communicable Virtues to the Sons of *Adam* : All other Beauties, in respect of this, are but *tenebrae*. What you see in the vaulted Heavens (which made the holy Prophet admire), the beauty of Sun, Moon, and Stars ; what you see upon Earth in the Spring, when nature has put on her rich embroidery ; whatever can be said of, or for Riches, Honours, Pleasures, Preferments in the World, are nothing in comparison of her loveliness. If that *O'modoud*, which St. Paul speaks of 1 Cor. 14. the exact and comely disposition of the Worship of God could be found in our Assemblies, where all persons with one consent should offer up their Spiritual Sacrifices to Almighty God, Angels would rejoyce, and delight to joyn with us, and make up the Chorus of sweet-singers in *Israel* : Papists would no longer have occasion to say, that we are *Fracti corde, & ore*.
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The sober part of Dissenters, that have truly tender Consciences, would no longer keep at a distance; you would then see the Antepast of Eternity, when Religion shall ascend the *Meridian* of her Glory, where there shall be *Μεσσηνία*, the same sound, and therefore *Εὐφορία*, all sweetly together singing Hallelujahs to their King. That which spoileth the beauty of our Service now, is want of Order, as the most exact piece of Beauty may be ill drawn, or the best Dish of meat spoil'd with ill cooking. Those Factions and Divisions which are amongst us, the slovenly, and nasty carriage of many, that come to our Assemblies; and of them also, which wait upon the Altar, represent Religion deformed, made up of disproportion; so that St. Paul's Infidel (if he should come amongst us) cannot say *the Lord is with us of a truth.*

Secondly, True Religion is most rational, answering the Philosophy of Man's Nature, and the Ends of Discourse. I know some Mysteries of our Religion are *supra rationem*, [that a Virgin should bring forth a Son, that the same should be *Θεοτόκος*, that the dead should rise again, &c.] but none of these are *contra rationem*. If you take Religion in a large sense, as she comprehendeth all Virtues, nothing can be more reasonable than her demands, To fear God, to love our neighbour, to be humble and meek, to honour our parents, to pray for our enemies; What can be more reasonable? God has now
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taken away the rigor and severity of the Law, and given us a yoke to bear, which is more easie, and the burthen more light. And if I come nearer the Text, you'll find it to be the purest reason, that God should have the fattest of the flock for his portion; the most ingenuous and holy observance in his Worship; the most exact order and decency in our approaches to him, which St. Paul calls *λογικὴν λατρίαν*, *Rom. 12. 1.* Now if Religion be thus rational in all her demands, it must also be of a knitting and cementing quality, Reason being the *substratum* of all Societies, of all Converse between man and man. And if we add to this the sweetness of her Nature, exactly answering the Conversation of our Blessed Saviour, when upon Earth, his Love, Affability, Candor, Humility; nothing certainly can better attract, and draw the Souls of reasonable men, than Religion. The Professors of it, I confess, are sometimes morose and cynical, not at all inviting in their behaviour; but the fault of them cannot be imputed to our Religion, which (though it does correct,) yet does it not utterly remove the frowardness of our Nature.

Thirdly, It is delicate and spiritual; so attenuate, that it can penetrate the Soul, ravish the Thoughts, and command the Conscience with a holy and sweet Violence. Good and bad Angels, as they are Spirits, have a power to suggest good, or bad thoughts: Of this refined substance
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is true Religion, and the Character given of the Word of God, by the Author to the *Hebrews*, Chap. 4. 12. *That it is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joynts and marrow*, may very properly represent the power which she has upon the souls of men; all which are *ῥακαλισμέναι*, laid open and naked before her. When St. Paul had established Order in the Church of *Corinth*, he prophesieth of the converting and convincing power that it would have upon the Conscience, *1 Cor. 14. 24.* *He is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, &c.* At least it has a convincing power; and he that is the most debauched upon the face of the earth, is forced to shut his eyes, as not able to behold the lustre and beauty of true Religion.

Thus have we taken a short view of the Nature of Religion; it will now be time to review it in the special influence it has upon the persons mentioned in the Text, *God, the King, and the People.*

First then, Kings are God's Representatives upon Earth, they bear his Image in a peculiar manner. The worst and most wicked of them declare his severity, in the punishments, which they inflict upon offenders with a liberal hand; their Crowns and Scepters show the absolute Dominion

Dominion and Rule which he exerciseth over all ; the Thrones which they sit upon ; his Glory and Majesty ; their vast attendance, Officers and Servitors signifie an innumerable company of Angels, which as winged Messengers, attend the first notice of his Will : But, alas ! this representation of God is but imperfect ; we see indeed part of his Glory, but no part of his Beauty ; rather his back parts, than his face : Men care not much to see *Jehovah* cloathed in the Robes of his strength and power, in the Altitudes of his Majesty and Greatness ; the sight of him, in this manner seems terrible, like his appearance upon *Mount Sinai*, when he gave forth his Law in lightning and thunder : But the beauties of God's face, which render him most acceptable to the sons and daughters of *Adam*, are conveyed to us only by a Religious Prince, where Justice and Mercy, Greatness and Goodness, Glory and Grace, are so sweetly commixed and attempered, that both Original and Copy, Substance and Shadow, God and the King are honoured and adored by all. Such a Prince as this, *St. Cyprian* calls *Animatam Dei. imaginem*, the Picture of God drawn out to the life ; and though there were no other reason, yet upon this account he must be *conjunctissimus Deo* : For as it is but just and equal that God should love himself first and best, because there can be no object so perfect as himself ; so is it but rational to believe, that next to himself, he will love those best who come nearest
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his Image, and represent him most amiable to the World : Nor is it improbable, that this is one choice reason why *David* is called a *Man after God's own heart*, viz. because he did not only as a Prophet, declare the Glory and Excellency of the divine Majesty, but as a King in his Religious and Holy Conversation publish the same.

Secondly, Princes are Sacred Persons, *uncti Domini*, the Lord's anointed ; the worst, as well as the best ; as well *Nero*, as *David* ; as we'll *Jeroboam*, the son of *Nebat* ; who made *Israel* to sin, as *Solomon* ; for there is no power, saith the Apostle, but of God ; he is the Fountain and Original of all : But Religious Kings are *Sacro-sancti*, as they have devoted themselves to the Honour of their great Lord and Master. This maketh the Almighty so careful and tender of their welfare, that not the weight of a finger must lye upon them without a curse, saying, *Touch not mine anointed*. And it seems, by the custom of Heathens, to be a principle in Nature ; for it was usual with them to make Virtuous and Renowned Princes, the companions of the Gods, *Referre eos in numerum Deorum*, to reckon them amongst the Gods.

Divisum imperium cum Jove Caesar habet.

The Greeks, and especially their Poets had as Phantastical opinions of their Hero's and Demons, they phancied their departure out of this world
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to be a Translation only, for presently you find them amongst the Gods of near relation to *Jupiter*, *Jove Satus*, & *Jove Ortus*; *Homer* abounds in such instances. The Church of *Rome*, though she has no great respect for Emperors and Kings; yet the homage which old *Rome* paid to their Princes, she offers to her Saints; whom though she denieth to Deifie, yet at least she Divifies, and too liberally gives them Divine Worship. By all these instances you may see, as in a glass, how wonderfully Religion does exalt a person, especially a Prince, in the Love of the Almighty, placing him under the direct beams of his Power and Goodness.

Thirdly, Religious Princes are *ex naturâ Dei*, partakers of the divine Nature, *I said ye are Gods*. I confess all Princes are so *virtute officii*; but Religious Princes *ex naturâ rei*, as they are in an extraordinary manner spirited and furnished by God for Government; their Souls usually are larger by far, than other mens; their hearts are deeper. *Saul*, the first King of *Israel*, is sent to the School of the Prophets, and there taught to prophecy, before he wears the Crown, or sways the Scepter: His Successor *David* was also a Prophet, indued with a noble and divine Spirit. The Wise man tells us, *Prov. 25. 3. That the hearts of Kings are unsearchable, not to be fathom'd*. *Moses* was possess'd of this glorious Spirit, it had been otherwise impossible to have govern'd that stubborn and unruly people, which at last tired

out his patience; and it is worthy observation, when God was pleased to ease him of some part of the burthen, *Numb. 11. 17.* he spake thus to him: *I will come down, and talk with thee, and will take off the Spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them, and they shall bear the burthen of the people with thee.* In all these respects, Religious and Holy Princes, as *Menander* observes; are *Εἰκαστικαὶ ἑστὶν εἰματα θεῶν*, the very Images of God; and therefore they must be nigh unto him, and he unto them.

Secondly, As true Religion does unite God and the King, so also the King and the People.

First, As it maketh the heart of a Prince truly noble and generous; for there is no School that can so excellently improve a Prince, as true Religion; no Precepts so refined, to furnish him with Wisdom for all parts of Government; no policy so true and successful; no learning does so exactly and precisely declare the duties of the one to the other as the Word of God; so that what Prince soever he be, that takes pleasure to govern according to those Rules, must needs be magnified in the eyes of his Subjects: These are the men that best deserve the names of *Patres Patrie*, to be revered, honoured, and esteemed of all. What a tender regard had the children of *Israel* for *David*; by no means must he endanger his Person in the battel, for in their eye he was more worth than ten thousand of them. Good *Josiah* did better deserve the name of *Delicium humani generis*.

generis, than *Cesar*: observe how the people lament him, by the lips and eyes of the weeping Prophet, *Lament. 4. 20. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord was taken in their nets: of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall be preserved alive among the heathen.*

Secondly, There is imprinted upon the Nature of man, a special reverence for Holiness and Religion, which you may easily perceive in the common people, who (tho they seldom understand what true Religion is) yet how do they hug and embrace the very rumour and report of it? Let Religion beat up a drum, and you cannot allay the heat of their spirits; they must follow the noise of it. This makes Satan, in our days, put on the appearance of an Angel of light; and every juggling Enthusiast will pretend Sanctity and Religion, when he designeth to obtrude his own blasphemies upon the World. How many miserable Souls are trepan'd into the thralldom of the *Romish* Church by a Religious blush, which sits upon the face of her Worship? It was no hard matter for the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* to swallow down whole houses under the pretence of Devotion. *Plutarch* in his *Politicks*, gives this advice to *Trajanus* the Emperor, *Venerare Deos, & per pietatem in eorum honorem, opibus tuis utare, magnopere enim multitudo affici solet, dum pietatem eorum conspiciunt, quos maximi ducunt.* Thus got *Numa Pompilius* such an excellent name; *Quod plurima fana, lucosque Deorum dedicavit.*

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The great design of Christian Religion, especially the publick and solemn Worship of God, is to render men alike one to another, of one heart, mind, way, and life: Our prayers are the same, that all of us, as one man, may consent to say *Amen*. Our Discourses either are, or should be the same, differing in phrase and manner of utterance; yet bearing proportion τοῖς ὑγιαίνουσιν λόγοις, to the wholesome form of sound words. We are initiated after the same manner by Baptism into one and the same Church, at the Eucharist fed at the same table with the same bread, refreshed with the same wine, by all incorporated, that being one body, all the members may have a mutual respect, and care one of another. St. Paul upon this consideration magnifieth the Christian Religion, *Eph. 4. 3.* as *keeping the unity of the spirit*: and commends it in the next words, for the power that it carrieth to secure the common interest of love, which he calleth the *bond of peace*; the reasonableness of which he evinceth, *v. 4.* *There is one body, as there is one spirit; as likewise ye are called into one hope of your calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptisme, one God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all things.* The whole body of Religion is comprized in this word *Love*; and we may judge of the sincere professors of it, by their conformity to it. Thus have I done with the second particular, the cementing nature of true Religion.

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The third and last Enquiry is, What priviledge the Text alloweth to a Nation, or People, whilst they are zealous and devout in Religious Worship, thus exprest: *Then shall ye, and the King which reigneth over you, continue to follow the Lord.* In the Original there is nothing at all found for following; all that is there exprest, is *יָחַד וְיָחַד*, which Translators have rendered as you read; the Septuagint does not much differ, *ἐπί τοῦ κυρίου πορεύσασθε*, *walking behind, or after the Lord*; the meaning of which must be, that as God, when they had no King, was their Captain, leading forth their Armies, and giving them success and victory, (for this was the great reason they urged for alteration of Government, that they might have a King to go out before them, and so fight their battels); so also upon due observation of Religious Worship, by him appointed, he would still be their General, and under his Banner they should fight victoriously over their Adversaries. Now that this blessing is not meerly temporary, belonging only to that people, but entailed upon Piety and Religion to all generations, is evident from the constant care, and tender respect he hath continued to his Church, to this day; for according to his promise, that the *gates of Hell shall never prevail against it*: so it is, and so it shall be, so long as the world endureth.

And lest it should be objected, that Promises of this nature are peculiar to the Church Universal, and have no reference to particular Churches, or Nations

Nations, (although true Religion be therein professed and encouraged) ; let it be remembered, that what belongs to the whole, belongs also to the part ; and though many particular Churches formerly renowned, are now utterly extinct, as the seven Churches of *Asia*, and many more ; yet before their ruine, they had a charge of notorious crimes drawn up against them, and notice of those exterminating Judgments, which (without repentance) would follow. God does very rarely, if ever, deal with Churches, or Societies of men, as with Individuals : these he oftentimes leaverh under dismal and sore afflictions ; not so much for the demerit of their Sins, as the probation of their Graces. This was the case of *Abraham*, of *Lot* in *Sodom*, of holy *Job*, who had this excellent character from God, at the very instant, when he sealed a Commission to Satan to afflict him, that he was an upright and perfect man. But who can tell of a Righteous Nation, which hath kept inviolate the Judgments and Statutes of Heaven, that was ever forsaken by God ? If you please to look home, you will find the never-failing Providences of the Almighty to watch over this Kingdom for good ; so long as we kept our Garments clean ; so long as Religion flourished, and the Corruptions thereof were discountenanced. Prosperity attended the long Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, although the Enemies of our Church were more numerous then, and as busie and active as they are now. The peaceable bringing in of King
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James, almost to a Miracle, was a demonstration of the kindness which God had for a people unanimous, (for then neither Popery nor Phanaticism were tolerated.) All the time he reigned both Church and State, were in a prosperous condition; but as soon as ever extravagant spirits began to break the unity of the spirit by Faction, then did God righteously begin to break the bond of peace. And it is farther observable, that when the Inhabitants of *England* waxed wanton in their Religion, then also did they become immoral, loose, and debauched in their lives; for Superstition, Heresie, Schism, Factions in the Church, and Adulteries, Fornication, Drunkenness, Prophaneness in the State, are but *gemini fratres*, which come into the world at one and the same time. If we look for a reason why men of all sorts, rich and poor, the Lord and the Beggar are so daring and confident in all kind of licentiousness, as if there were neither Heaven nor Hell, God, or Devil, you need not go far, Religion hath not been encouraged, which was always, and ever will be (may she be protected) a curb to all Impiety.

If any man therefore shall ask why the promise of the Text is not made good to *England*, why we are in a trembling, dangerous condition? The Answer is near; Protestants have declined in their Zeal; abated in their love to Religion: these burned gloriously a considerable time after the Reformation, but now their heat and light are both impaired. Some are turned *Atheists*, and so hate
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Religion; others are turned *Hereticks*, and so corrupt it; a multitude are become froward *Schismaticks*, and at this day are tearing and renting it into pieces.

The proud Atheist scorns to be control'd; his tongue is his own, and he will be Lord of it. Tush, doth the Lord see? and is there any knowledge in the most high? *He hath said in his heart, There is no God*: And this abominable Principle openeth a sluice for a whole flood and deluge of all Impieties, *Psal.* 14.

*Esse aliquos manes, & subterranea regna;
Et Contum, & Stigio ranas in gurgite nigras
Nec pneri credunt.*

They will not believe any thing of this nature, unless sometimes God doth extort it. *St. Paul* met with this herd of men, rather beasts, that were laughing at the resurrection of the dead, as a meer cheat imposed upon the world to keep it quiet, *1 Cor.* 15. And the abominable conclusion which they draw from these horrid Premises, you may there read, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we shall dye*; i. e. after death we shall neither taste nor smell, but be annihilated; and therefore let us have as great a share of pleasure, as we can, before it cometh. Can it be well with the Nation, whilst this Viperous brood are suffered to rant and hector in the World, venture into Gentlemens company, diffuse their payson, take liberty to baffle young and old, to make as many Profelytes to Hell as they can?

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These men that deserve the worst of Deaths for their blasphemy, at least to have their tongues cut out, are the Gallants of the time, and no man must be so faucy as to controule them. Can there be peace, whilst these go unpunished?

Secondly, Hereticks corrupt our Religion: for this is the next piece of Satan's damnable policy; if he cannot club down true Religion, and force it out of the world, he will make it as useles, as may be, in the world, by spoiling the simplicity, and adulterating the purity of it: His instruments are always prepared to serve this cursed turn, men that are reserved, close, carrying the fairest show of Religion, that with more facility they may confound it. *Nestorius* will by no means deny the Blessed Virgin to be the Mother of Christ, but she must not be the Mother of God, subtilly designing thereby to spoil the glorious office of a Mediator. We have too many amongst us at this day, who have swallowed down the poyson of this cursed Doctrine, granting that Christ dyed at *Jerusalem*, without the gate; but they will not own him to be a Saviour of the World: He was indeed a good man, but not *ab aeterno*; there was a time when he was neither God, nor Man. I should be too tedious in enumerating many instances of this nature, there being (I believe) no Article of our Creed, which at this day is not depraved: We are not without *Arians*, *Socinians*, *Munsterians*, &c. who tho they lye snug and close, not appearing like the broad-fac'd *Atheist*, yet are they as dan-

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gerous to Church and State, and as great disturbers of the peace of our *Israel*, as the former.

Lastly, The angry Schismatick, who tho he professeth the same Faith and Doctrine with our Church, yet does he scorn that any should conduct his Zeal in the Worship of God : Whereas a truly pious, and humble Soul, whether he be of the Clergy, or Laity, entertaineth low thoughts of himself, and is willing to be guided in those things that concern Discipline ; the other is proud, self-conceited, and thinks that he is more fit to govern, than to be governed. I confess Charity commands me to believe, that some Dissenters have better hearts, but these may easily be differenced from the rest, by their meekness, patience, readiness to be informed : But when men have brazen brows, Iron necks, I cannot conceive how they should have tender consciences ; and let them pretend to what they please, yet till I see them fashioned to the sweetness of the Gospel of Christ, I cannot perswade my self, that they aim at the Glory of God, or the Exaltation of true Religion.

But are there none else, none amongst our selves, who deprive us of the blessed influence of the promise ? I fear we cannot excuse our selves. Our want of devotion, our irreverence and hypocrisie in the presence of Almighty God will bear witness against us. We rather bring our pomp and gallantry with us into the publick Assemblies, than our consciences ; our eyes, than our ears ; our faces, than our faith ; our lusts than our graces ; we look not upon Religion

ligion as our business, but rather our diversion; not the *ἡμετέριον* of our souls, but the *πάρεργον* of our fancies. When I consider how devout Heathens have been at the Worship of their Idols; with what fear and reverence they approach their Deities; what study to make them propitious; how superstitious, not daring to strike the first blow, nor begin a battel, till they have killed their sacrifice, and found out the *faustum omen*. When I read how cogent *Pliny* is in his Panegyrick to his *Mecenas*, *nihil bene, riteque auspicandum, sine Deorum immortalium nutu, & consilio*; how penitent and sorrowful they have been, when sensible of any neglect in Religion.

It may cause Christians to blush at the indifferency and looseness of their behaviour before the All-seeing God. When I see our Congregations full of those men and women, which *St. Chrysostome* complaineth of in his days, *Κρεμίνων, χασμομένων, νύκτων, ὄρων*, dull, sottish, sleepy souls, snoring, yawning, I may add whispering, laughing, intent upon, nothing less than Religion. Lastly, When I consider the immoralities of all, from the highest to the lowest, of Priest and People, rich and poor, the common and bloody Oaths, the National drunkenness, adulteries, fornication, murders, too common and rife amongst us; there cannot, methinks, be any room left for this Question, Why is it thus with *England*, since we profess true Religion? but rather why are we not as *Sodom* and *Gomorrath*, as *Admah* and *Zeboiim*, since our abominations are


as weighty and numerous as theirs were? I have no more to add to this first Proposition, but to leave these few words to your consideration; That as it was neglect of Religion, which did first open a wide and effectual door, through which crouded in upon us all Impieties, and both together have caused the Heavens to look sable and black over us; so must Religion be exalted to her former simplicity and observance, before we can expect the face of our God to shine upon us; which will lead me to this short word of Application.

You see, Right Honourable, both our wounds, and the cure of them, the only restorative of our consumptive, both Church and State; use, I beseech you, with all diligence and speed this healing plaister; pour of this blessed Oyl into our wounds; let us not bleed to death in the lap of our abominations, although it be an easie death; Oh! let not an Icy slumber seal up our eyes to everlasting darkness. We are brought low, very low, if the floods of Irreligion and Impiety be not stopped, our destruction cannot be far. Stir up your selves therefore to a due consideration of our danger; be strong and courageous, you that have power to suppress all Prophaneness; let not the wild beasts of the Forrest, wicked and debauched persons, trample under their prophane feet, the Royal and Holy Law; it's below a Christian to be a meer man, when the interests of God and Religion lye at the stake. Indeaour, I beseech you, to establish Unity, as well as Purity in Religion. Why should men, without

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controle, take liberty againſt Law, not only to ſeparate from our publick Aſſemblies, but ſet up Altar againſt Altar? Reaſonable men would ſoon be perſwaded to frequent our Congregations, were it not for them who are heady, high-minded, and unreaſonable, men that love to Proſelyte ſilly ſouls, that they may ſerve to maintain their own Factions, whiſt they exerciſe a ſordid Jurisdiction over their Conſciences. I confeſs it's a vanity to go about to knock down mens reaſon, or to captivate their minds by force; let them abound in their own ſenſe, pleaſe their own fancies in their retirements; but in publick worſhip, where we are all alike intereſſed, there, I beſeech you, contend earneſtly for a bleſſed agreement. Every river and rivulet will have its private murmurs, according to thoſe Eddies and turns which oppoſe their waters; but the Ocean, into which they all empty themſelves, hath but one ſound; it were deſirable that every Chriſtian were a good Oeconomy, able to govern himſelf and family according to the Laws of God and his Church; but who looks into corners, or digs a hole through his neighbours Wall, to pry into his Family-devotions? But no leſs can be expected, then that upon ſolemn days of Worſhip they ſhould be ready to joyn with us, in ſetting forth the praiſes of our gracious God, and preſenting our Petitions at the Throne of his Mercy. This is the counſel of the Text; which if we will entertain, we may ſtill continue to follow the Lord; if not, I muſt
leave

leave to your consideration the 13th Verse of the
Text, *The hand of the Lord shall be against you, as
it was against your Fathers.* Which God of his
infinite Mercy divert, for the sake of our dearest
Lord: To whom with thee, O Father, and the
Holy Spirit, be all Glory and praise for ever-
more.



FINIS.

